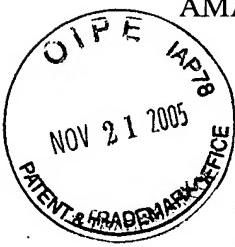


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PATENT



IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicants : Robertson, et. al.
Appl. No. : 10/780,486
Filed : February 17, 2004
For : NETWORK-BASED PERSONAL
CONTACT MANAGER AND
ASSOCIATED METHODS
Examiner : Romain Jeanty
Group Art Unit : 3623

APPEAL BRIEF

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Appellants, Applicants in the above-captioned patent application, appeal the final rejection of Claims 1-8, 10-21 and 34-37 set forth in the Final Office Action mailed on May 24, 2004 (hereinafter "the Final Office Action"). A check for the filing fee is enclosed. Please charge any additional fees that may be required now or in the future to Deposit Account No. 11-1410.

I. REAL PARTY IN INTEREST

The real party in interest in the present application is Amazon.com, Inc.

II. RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

No related appeals or interferences are pending.

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III. STATUS OF CLAIMS

Claims 1-8, 10-21 and 34-37 are currently pending in the application, and are attached hereto as an appendix. All of the pending claims were finally rejected in the Final Office Action and are the subject of this appeal.

IV. STATUS OF AMENDMENTS

No amendments were made in response to the Final Office Action.

V. SUMMARY OF CLAIMED SUBJECT MATTER

The present application includes two independent claims. Each independent claim is paraphrased below, with citations to corresponding portions of the specification and drawings as required by 37 C.F.R. § 41.37(c)(1)(v). These citations are provided in order to illustrate specific examples and embodiments of the recited claim language, and not to limit or interpret the claims. A citation to a specific paragraph or appendix in the following claim summaries should be treated as a citation to all lines of that paragraph or appendix.

Claim 1 is directed to a network-based personal contact management system (see, e.g., Fig. 5, and page 6, paragraph 30). The system comprises:

- a networked server system (see, e.g., 330 in Fig. 5) that provides a user interface (see, e.g., 380 in Fig. 5, and Figs. 8 and 10) having functionality for users to establish relationships with other users such that each user may have one or more contacts (see, e.g., page 6, ¶ 0030; page 9, ¶ 0042; page 10, ¶ 0046; page 11, ¶ 0049, and page 15, ¶¶ 0069 and 0070);
- a database (see, e.g., 340 in Fig. 5) that stores relationship data indicating the relationships established between the users via the user interface, wherein the relationship data identifies, for each respective user, which other users are contacts of the respective user (see, e.g., page 7, ¶ 0034; page 11, ¶ 0049; and page 14, ¶ 0068); and
- a search module that provides functionality for users to search the database for contacts of their respective contacts, wherein the search module is responsive to performance of a search by a first user by using said relationship data to identify other users that are

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contacts of contacts of the first user (see, e.g., Fig. 13; page 4, ¶ 0011; page 14, ¶ 0064; pages 22-23, ¶¶ 0094-0097; 343 in Fig. 5; and Appendix G on page 33).

Claim 11 is directed to a computer-implemented method, in a network-based system that provides functionality for users to communicate with other users, for assisting users in locating other users with which to communicate. The method comprises:

- providing a database that stores, for each user of a plurality of users, information about contacts of the respective user (see, e.g., 340 in Fig. 5; page 6, ¶ 0030; page 7, ¶ 0034; page 11, ¶ 0049; and page 14, ¶ 0068);
- receiving, from a first user of said plurality of users, a search request to search for contacts of contacts of the first user (see, e.g., page 14, ¶ 0064; pages 22-23, ¶¶ 0094-0097; and Appendix G on page 33); and
- in response to the search request, searching the database to identify a set of users who are contacts of contacts of the first user, and notifying the first user of the set of users (see, e.g., Fig. 13; page 14, ¶ 0064; page 22-23, ¶¶ 0094-0097, and Appendix G on page 33).

VI. GROUNDS OF REJECTION TO BE REVIEWED ON APPEAL

The following rejections are to be reviewed on appeal:

1. The rejection of Claims 1, 7, 8, 10, 11, 16, 19, 20 and 34-37 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of Appellants' "admitted prior art" (i.e., the description in the background section of the present application), U.S. Patent No. 5,796,395 ("de Hond"), and U.S. Patent No. 5,263,160 ("Porter").
2. The rejection of Claims 2-6, 12-15, 17, 18 and 21 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of Appellants' "admitted prior art," de Hond, and U.S. Patent No. 5,835,087 ("Herz").

Appellants will treat de Hond and Herz as prior art for purposes of this appeal, but reserve the right to later disqualify one or both references as prior art.

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VII. ARGUMENT

1. Rejection of Claims 1, 7, 8, 10, 11, 16, 19, 20 and 34-37 over Appellants' "admitted prior art," de Hond, and Porter

For the reasons set forth below, Appellants respectfully submit that the obviousness rejection of Claims 1, 7, 8, 10, 11, 16, 19, 20 and 34-37 is improper.

As an initial matter, Appellants wish to point out that the "admitted prior art" relied on by the Examiner in connection with these claims appears to consist of Appellants' background description of the Groupware system shown in Figure 2 of the present application. For purposes of clarity, this particular prior art description, which can be found at paragraphs 0006-0008 of the present application, will be referred to as "Appellants' Groupware description." To the extent the Examiner may also be relying on the Appellants' prior art description of the "Personal Information Management Software" system shown in Figure 1, Appellants respectfully submit that such reliance is improper because the Examiner has not set forth any basis for combining this Personal Information Management system of Figure 1 with the Groupware system of Figure 2.

Independent Claim 1

The rejection of Claim 1 is improper because, among other reasons, Appellants' Groupware description, de Hond and Porter do not individually or collectively disclose or suggest "a search module that provides functionality for users to search the database for contacts of their respective contacts," in the context of the other limitations of Claim 1. Of the three references relied on by the Examiner to reject Claim 1, only de Hond discloses methods for enabling users to search for other users. Nothing in de Hond, however suggests any capability for users to search for contacts of their respective contacts.

In connection with these limitations of Claim 1, the Examiner asserts that it would have been obvious, given the disclosure of de Hond, to modify the Groupware system described in Appellants' application to permit users to search for contacts of their respective contacts. Final Office Action at page 3, lines 15-21. Appellants respectfully disagree for at least two reasons. First, as mentioned above, although de Hond describes functionality for users to conduct searches for others users, nothing in de Hond suggests functionality for users to search for contacts of their

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respective contacts. Thus, nothing can be taken from de Hond that would suggest adding this feature to the disclosed Groupware system.

Second, even if de Hond could somehow be construed to suggest a search module that provides functionality for users to search for contacts of their respective contacts, it is not clear that such a feature would have any utility in the context of the disclosed Groupware system. In this regard, nothing in the present application's background section suggests that the Groupware system allowed users to individually specify their respective contacts such that different users would have different sets of contacts. Without such a capability, there apparently would be little or no reason for Groupware users to search for contacts of their respective contacts; thus, there would be no motivation to add the "contacts of contacts search" feature to the Groupware system.

The rejection of Claim 1 is also improper because Appellants' Groupware description, de Hond, and Porter do not disclose or suggest the following limitations of Claim 1: "wherein the search module is responsive to performance of a search by a first user by using said relationship data to identify other users that are contacts of contacts of the first user." In connection with this claim language, the Examiner relies, at least in-part, on col. 3, lines 29-50 and col. 8, lines 26-50 of Porter, which describe techniques for efficiently searching a doubly-linked list of ordered data elements. Final Office Action at page 4, first full paragraph. The Examiner does not make any attempt, however, to explain how or why the above-quoted limitations of Claim 1 are disclosed or suggested by these sections of Porter.

Appellants also respectfully submit that the Examiner has not identified a suggestion or motivation to combine Porter with either de Hond or Appellants' Groupware description. In connection with this issue, the Examiner asserts that it would have been obvious to use Porter's search methods in the context of Appellants' "admitted prior art" and de Hond "with the motivation to access the first element in a list of contact information." Final Office Action at page 4, first full paragraph. Nothing in Porter, however, suggests using the search methods described therein to search or access user contact information. Further, nothing in the cited references suggests that Porter's search methods would be necessary, or even helpful, to the task of accessing the first element of contact information in the context of the Groupware system or de Hond. Thus, the references do not support the Examiner's assertion regarding a motivation to combine.

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In summary, because the Appellants' Groupware description, de Hond and Porter do not disclose or suggest all of the limitations of Claim 1, and because the Examiner has not identified a suggestion or motivation to combine all three references, the rejection of Claim 1 is improper and should be withdrawn.

Dependent Claim 7

Claim 7 depends from, and stands or falls with, Claim 1.

Dependent Claim 8

Because Claim 8 depends from Claim 1, the rejection of Claim 8 is improper for the reasons set forth above for Claim 1. In addition, the rejection of Claim 8 is improper because Appellants' Groupware description, de Hond and Porter do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 8, namely "wherein the search module provides functionality for the first user to search the database for contacts of contacts of the first user that are affiliated with a group with which the first user is also affiliated." The Final Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 10

Claim 10 depends from, and stands or falls with, Claim 1.

Dependent Claim 36

Because Claim 36 depends from Claim 1, the rejection of Claim 36 is improper for the reasons set forth above for Claim 1. In addition, the rejection of Claim 36 is improper because Appellants' Groupware description, de Hond and Porter do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 36, namely "wherein the search module identifies said other users that are contacts of contacts of the first user, at least in part, by performing a database join operation to join tables of said database." The Final Office Action does not address these limitations of Claim 36.

Dependent Claim 37

Because Claim 37 depends from Claim 1, the rejection of Claim 37 is improper for the reasons set forth above for Claim 1. In addition, the rejection of Claim 37 is improper because Appellants' Groupware description, de Hond and Porter do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 37, namely "wherein the search module is additionally responsive to performance of the search by notifying the first user how an identified contact of a contact of the

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first user is related to the first user.” (One embodiment of this feature is depicted by Figure 13, element 690 of the present application.) The Final Office Action does not address these limitations of Claim 37.

Independent Claim 11

The rejection of Claim 11 is improper because, among other reasons, Appellants’ Groupware description, de Hond and Porter do not individually or collectively disclose or suggest the following limitations: “receiving, from a first user of said plurality of users, a search request to search for contacts of contacts of the first user; and in response to the search request, searching the database to identify a set of users who are contacts of contacts of the first user, and notifying the first user of the set of users.” As discussed above in connection with Claim 1, although de Hond discloses functionality for users to search for other users, nothing can be taken from de Hond that would suggest modifying the disclosed Groupware system to allow a first user to search for contacts of contacts of the first users. Porter does not include any suggestion of such a capability, and thus does not cure this deficiency in de Hond.

The rejection of Claim 11 is also improper because, as set forth above in connection with Claim 1, the Examiner has not identified a suggestion or motivation to combine Porter with either de Hond or Appellants’ Groupware description.

Dependent Claim 16

Claim 16 depends from, and stands or falls with, Claim 11.

Dependent Claim 19

Because Claim 19 depends from Claim 11, the rejection of Claim 19 is improper for the reasons set forth above for Claim 11. In addition, the rejection of Claim 19 is improper because Appellants’ Groupware description, de Hond and Porter do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 19, namely “wherein notifying the first user of the set of users comprises displaying an indication of how each user in the set is related to the first user.” The Final Office Action does not address these limitations of Claim 19.

Dependent Claim 20

Because Claim 20 depends from Claim 11, the rejection of Claim 20 is improper for the reasons set forth above for Claim 11. In addition, the rejection of Claim 20 is improper because Appellants’ Groupware description, de Hond and Porter do not disclose or suggest the limitations

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added by Claim 20, namely “further comprising providing to the first user an option to add a user from said set of users to a personal address book of the first user.” The Final Office Action does not fully address these limitations of Claim 20.

Dependent Claim 34

Because Claim 34 depends from Claim 11, the rejection of Claim 34 is improper for the reasons set forth above for Claim 11. In addition, the rejection of Claim 34 is improper because Appellants’ Groupware description, de Hond and Porter do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 34, namely “wherein searching the database comprises joining tables of said database to identify users who are contacts of contacts of the first user.” The Final Office Action does not fully address these limitations of Claim 34.

Dependent Claim 35

Because Claim 35 depends from Claim 11, the rejection of Claim 35 is improper for the reasons set forth above for Claim 11. In addition, the rejection of Claim 35 is improper because Appellants’ Groupware description, de Hond and Porter do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 35, namely “wherein notifying the first user of the set of users comprises generating a display that identifies, for a second user who is a member of the set, an intervening user who serves as a link between the first and second users.” The Final Office Action does not fully address these limitations of Claim 35.

2. Rejection of Claims 2-6, 12-15, 17, 18 and 21 over Appellants’ “admitted prior art,” de Hond, and Herz

Appellants respectfully submit that the obviousness rejection of dependent Claims 2-6, 12-15, 17, 18 and 21 is improper for the reasons set forth below.

As a preliminary matter, Appellants wish to point out that it is not clear from the Final Office Action whether, in connection with these claims, the Examiner is relying on more than one of the prior art systems disclosed in the background section of the present application. To the extent the Examiner may be relying on a combination of these prior art systems (such as the systems shown in Figures 1 and 2), Appellants submit that such reliance is improper because the Examiner has not identified any basis for combining these prior art systems.

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Dependent Claim 2

Claim 2 depends from Claim 1. The rejection of Claim 2 is improper because Appellants' "admitted prior art," de Hond and Herz do not disclose or suggest at least the following limitations of independent Claim 1: "wherein the search module is responsive to performance of a search by a first user by using said relationship data to identify other users that are contacts of contacts of the first user." In rejecting Claim 1, the Examiner relied on Porter in connection with these limitations. See Final Office Action at page 4, first full paragraph. However, the Examiner does not rely on Porter in rejecting Claim 2; in addition, the Examiner does not identify any disclosure or suggestion of these limitations in Appellants' "admitted prior art," de Hond, or Herz. Thus, the rejection of Claim 2 is improper.

The rejection of Claim 2 is also improper because Appellants' "admitted prior art," de Hond and Herz do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 2, namely "wherein the database additionally includes personal data records of the users, and the relationship data specifies permission levels granted by each respective user for allowing specific contacts of the respective user to view information from the personal data record of the respective user, and the server system controls access to the personal data records according to said permission levels." In connection with these limitations of Claim 2, Appellants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's position that Herz discloses or suggests the use of "permission levels granted by each respective user for allowing specific contacts of the respective user to view information from the personal data record of the respective user." To the contrary, the cited portions of Herz (namely col. 1, lines 35-43 and col. 5 lines 40-48) appear to merely disclose the ability for a user to indicate generally whether user profile information used to recommend news articles or other types of objects to the user is to be made accessible to third parties.

Dependent Claim 3

Because Claim 3 depends from Claim 2, the rejection of Claim 3 is improper for the reasons set forth above for Claim 2. In addition, the rejection of Claim 3 is improper because Appellants' "admitted prior art," de Hond and Herz do not disclose or suggest the following limitations added by Claim 3: "wherein the user interface includes a personal address book interface through which each user can view information about his or her respective contacts in

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accordance with the permission levels.” The Final Office Action does not fully address these limitations of Claim 3.

Dependent Claim 4

Claim 4 depends from Claim 1. The rejection of Claim 4 is improper because, as set forth above in the discussion of Claim 2, Appellants’ “admitted prior art,” de Hond and Herz do not disclose or suggest at least the following limitations of independent Claim 1: “wherein the search module is responsive to performance of a search by a first user by using said relationship data to identify other users that are contacts of contacts of the first user.”

The rejection of Claim 4 is also improper because Appellants’ “admitted prior art,” de Hond and Herz do not disclose or suggest the following limitations added by Claim 4: “wherein the relationship data specifies permission levels granted by users for sharing information with other users, and the search module searches for contacts of contacts in accordance with the permission levels.” The Final Office Action does not fully address these limitations of Claim 4.

Dependent Claim 5

Because Claim 5 depends from Claim 4, the rejection of Claim 5 is improper for the reasons set forth above for Claim 4. In addition, the rejection of Claim 5 is improper because Appellants’ “admitted prior art,” de Hond and Herz do not disclose or suggest the following limitations added by Claim 5: “wherein the permission levels indicate, for each respective contact of the first user, whether the first user is authorized to search for contacts of the respective contact.” The Final Office Action does not address these limitations of Claim 5.

Dependent Claim 6

Because Claim 6 depends from Claim 4, the rejection of Claim 6 is improper for the reasons set forth above for Claim 4. In addition, the rejection of Claim 6 is improper because Appellants’ “admitted prior art,” de Hond and Herz do not disclose or suggest the following limitations added by Claim 6: “wherein the permission levels indicate, for at least a second user who is a contact of the first user, whether the first user is permitted to search for contacts of the second user.” The Final Office Action does not address these limitations of Claim 6.

Dependent Claim 12

Claim 12 depends from independent Claim 11. The rejection of Claim 12 is improper because Appellants’ “admitted prior art,” de Hond and Herz do not disclose or suggest at least

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the following limitations of independent Claim 11: “in response to the search request, searching the database to identify a set of users who are contacts of contacts of the first user, and notifying the first user of the set of users.” In rejecting independent Claim 11, the Examiner appears to rely, at least in part, on the disclosure of Porter. However, the Examiner does not rely on Porter in rejecting dependent Claim 12, and does not identify any disclosure or suggestion of these limitations in Appellants’ “admitted prior art,” de Hond, or Herz. Thus, the rejection of Claim 12 is improper.

The rejection of Claim 12 is also improper because Appellants’ “admitted prior art,” de Hond and Herz do not disclose or suggest the following limitations added by Claim 12 “wherein searching the database comprises taking into consideration permissions granted by the users such that a second user who is a contact of a contact of the first user will not be exposed to the first user unless the second user has granted permission to allow such exposure.” To the extent the Examiner may be relying on Herz in connection with these limitations, Appellants submit that these limitations are not suggested by Herz’s disclosure of the ability for a user to request that his or her profile information be kept confidential.

Dependent Claim 13

Claim 13 depends from independent Claim 11. The rejection of Claim 13 is improper because, as explained above in connection with Claim 12, Appellants’ “admitted prior art,” de Hond and Herz do not disclose or suggest at least the following limitations of independent Claim 11: “in response to the search request, searching the database to identify a set of users who are contacts of contacts of the first user, and notifying the first user of the set of users.”

The rejection of Claim 13 is also improper because Appellants’ “admitted prior art,” de Hond and Herz do not disclose or suggest the following limitations added by Claim 13 “wherein searching the database comprises taking into consideration permissions granted by the users such that a second user, who is a contact of a third user who is a contact of the first user, will not be exposed to the first user unless both the second user and the third user have granted permissions that authorize such exposure.” The Final Office Action does not fully address these limitations of Claim 13.

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Dependent Claim 14

Claim 14 depends from Claim 11. The rejection of Claim 14 is improper because, as explained above in connection with Claim 12, Appellants' "admitted prior art," de Hond and Herz do not disclose or suggest at least the following limitations of Claim 11: "in response to the search request, searching the database to identify a set of users who are contacts of contacts of the first user, and notifying the first user of the set of users."

The rejection of Claim 14 is also improper because Appellants' "admitted prior art," de Hond and Herz do not disclose or suggest the following limitations added by Claim 14 "wherein searching the database comprises taking into consideration permissions granted by the users such that contacts of a second user who is a contact of the first user are not searched unless the second user has granted permission to the first user to search for contacts of the second user." The Final Office Action does not fully address these limitations of Claim 14.

Dependent Claim 15

Claim 15 depends from Claim 11. The rejection of Claim 15 is improper because, as explained above in connection with Claim 12, Appellants' "admitted prior art," de Hond and Herz do not disclose or suggest at least the following limitations of Claim 11: "in response to the search request, searching the database to identify a set of users who are contacts of contacts of the first user, and notifying the first user of the set of users."

The rejection of Claim 15 is also improper because Appellants' "admitted prior art," de Hond and Herz do not disclose or suggest the following limitations added by Claim 15 "wherein searching the database additionally comprises excluding a set of contacts of a second user who is a contact of the first user if the second user has not granted permission to the first user to search the second user's contacts." The Final Office Action does not fully address these limitations of Claim 15.

Dependent Claim 17

Claim 17 depends from Claim 11. The rejection of Claim 17 is improper because, as explained above in connection with Claim 12, Appellants' "admitted prior art," de Hond and Herz do not disclose or suggest at least the following limitations of Claim 11: "in response to the search request, searching the database to identify a set of users who are contacts of contacts of the first user, and notifying the first user of the set of users."

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The rejection of Claim 17 is also improper because Appellants' "admitted prior art," de Hond and Herz do not disclose or suggest the following limitations added by Claim 17 "wherein searching the database comprises taking group affiliation data of the users into consideration to search for users who both (a) are contacts of contacts of the first user, and (b) are affiliated with a group with which the first user is also affiliated." The Final Office Action does not fully address these limitations of Claim 17.

Dependent Claim 18

Claim 18 depends from Claim 11. The rejection of Claim 18 is improper because, as explained above in connection with Claim 12, Appellants' "admitted prior art," de Hond and Herz do not disclose or suggest at least the following limitations of Claim 11: "in response to the search request, searching the database to identify a set of users who are contacts of contacts of the first user, and notifying the first user of the set of users."

The rejection of Claim 18 is also improper because Appellants' "admitted prior art," de Hond and Herz do not disclose or suggest the following limitations added by Claim 18: "wherein notifying the first user of the set of users comprises informing the first user that a user in said set is affiliated with a group with which the first user is also affiliated." The Final Office Action does not fully address these limitations of Claim 18.

Dependent Claim 21

Claim 21 depends from Claim 11. The rejection of Claim 21 is improper because, as explained above in connection with Claim 12, Appellants' "admitted prior art," de Hond and Herz do not disclose or suggest at least the following limitations of Claim 21: "in response to the search request, searching the database to identify a set of users who are contacts of contacts of the first user, and notifying the first user of the set of users."

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VIII. CONCLUSION

For the reasons set forth above, the rejections of Claims 1-8, 10-21 and 34-37 are improper and should be reversed.

Respectfully submitted,

KNOBBE, MARTENS, OLSON & BEAR, LLP

Dated: 11 - 18 - 05

By: 
Ronald J. Schoenbaum
Reg. No. 38,297
Knobbe, Martens, Olson & Bear, LLP
2040 Main Street, 14th Floor
Irvine, CA 92614
Customer No. 20,995

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CLAIMS APPENDIX

1. A network-based personal contact management system, comprising:
 - a networked server system that provides a user interface having functionality for users to establish relationships with other users such that each user may have one or more contacts;
 - a database that stores relationship data indicating the relationships established between the users via the user interface, wherein the relationship data identifies, for each respective user, which other users are contacts of the respective user; and
 - a search module that provides functionality for users to search the database for contacts of their respective contacts, wherein the search module is responsive to performance of a search by a first user by using said relationship data to identify other users that are contacts of contacts of the first user.
2. The system of Claim 1, wherein the database additionally includes personal data records of the users, and the relationship data specifies permission levels granted by each respective user for allowing specific contacts of the respective user to view information from the personal data record of the respective user, and the server system controls access to the personal data records according to said permission levels.
3. The system of Claim 2, wherein the user interface includes a personal address book interface through which each user can view information about his or her respective contacts in accordance with the permission levels.
4. The system of Claim 1, wherein the relationship data specifies permission levels granted by users for sharing information with other users, and the search module searches for contacts of contacts in accordance with the permission levels.
5. The system of Claim 4, wherein the permission levels indicate, for each respective contact of the first user, whether the first user is authorized to search for contacts of the respective contact.
6. The system of Claim 4, wherein the permission levels indicate, for at least a second user who is a contact of the first user, whether the first user is permitted to search for contacts of the second user.

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7. The system of Claim 1, wherein the search module provides functionality for the first user to search the database for contacts of contacts of the first user that reside in a common geographic region with the first user.

8. The system of Claim 1, wherein the search module provides functionality for the first user to search the database for contacts of contacts of the first user that are affiliated with a group with which the first user is also affiliated.

9. (canceled)

10. The system of Claim 1, wherein the search module runs on the server system and is accessed by the users via the user interface.

11. In a network-based system that provides functionality for users to communicate with other users, a computer-implemented method for assisting users in locating other users with which to communicate, the method comprising:

providing a database that stores, for each user of a plurality of users, information about contacts of the respective user;

receiving, from a first user of said plurality of users, a search request to search for contacts of contacts of the first user; and

in response to the search request, searching the database to identify a set of users who are contacts of contacts of the first user, and notifying the first user of the set of users.

12. The method of Claim 11, wherein searching the database comprises taking into consideration permissions granted by the users such that a second user who is a contact of a contact of the first user will not be exposed to the first user unless the second user has granted permission to allow such exposure.

13. The method of Claim 11, wherein searching the database comprises taking into consideration permissions granted by the users such that a second user, who is a contact of a third user who is a contact of the first user, will not be exposed to the first user unless both the second user and the third user have granted permissions that authorize such exposure.

14. The method of Claim 11, wherein searching the database comprises taking into consideration permissions granted by the users such that contacts of a second user who is a

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contact of the first user are not searched unless the second user has granted permission to the first user to search for contacts of the second user.

15. The method of Claim 11, wherein searching the database additionally comprises excluding a set of contacts of a second user who is a contact of the first user if the second user has not granted permission to the first user to search the second user's contacts.

16. The method of Claim 11, wherein searching the database comprises taking residence information of the users into consideration to search for users who both (a) are contacts of contacts of the first user, and (b) reside in a common geographic region with the first user.

17. The method of Claim 11, wherein searching the database comprises taking group affiliation data of the users into consideration to search for users who both (a) are contacts of contacts of the first user, and (b) are affiliated with a group with which the first user is also affiliated.

18. The method of Claim 11, wherein notifying the first user of the set of users comprises informing the first user that a user in said set is affiliated with a group with which the first user is also affiliated.

19. The method of Claim 11, wherein notifying the first user of the set of users comprises displaying an indication of how each user in the set is related to the first user.

20. The method of Claim 11, further comprising providing to the first user an option to add a user from said set of users to a personal address book of the first user.

21. The method of Claim 11, wherein the database additionally stores personal data records of the users, and permissions granted by the users for exposing information from their respective personal data records to other users, and the method further comprises providing user access to the personal data records in accordance with the permissions.

22-33: (canceled)

34. The method of Claim 11, wherein searching the database comprises joining tables of said database to identify users who are contacts of contacts of the first user.

35. The method of Claim 11, wherein notifying the first user of the set of users comprises generating a display that identifies, for a second user who is a member of the set, an intervening user who serves as a link between the first and second users.

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36. The system of Claim 1, wherein the search module identifies said other users that are contacts of contacts of the first user, at least in part, by performing a database join operation to join tables of said database.

37. The system of Claim 1, wherein the search module is additionally responsive to performance of the search by notifying the first user how an identified contact of a contact of the first user is related to the first user.

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EVIDENCE APPENDIX

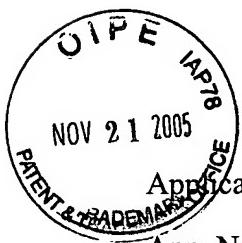
None

RELATED PROCEEDINGS APPENDIX

None

Docket No. : AMAZON.18C1C1
Application No. : 10/780,486
Filing Date : February 17, 2004

Customer No.: 20,995



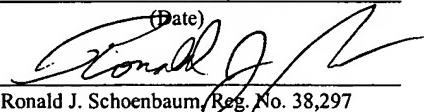
APPEAL BRIEF

Applicants : Robertson, et al.
App. No : 10/780,486
Filed : February 17, 2004
For : NETWORK-BASED PERSONAL
CONTACT MANAGER AND
ASSOCIATED METHODS
Examiner : Romain Jeanty
Art Unit : 3623

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence and all marked attachments are being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first-class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on

November 18, 2005

(Date)

Ronald J. Schoenbaum, Reg. No. 38,297

Mail Stop Appeal Brief-Patents

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

Transmitted herewith for filing in the above-identified application are the following enclosures:

- (X) Appeal Brief in 19 pages;
- (X) A check in the amount of \$500.00; and
- (X) A return prepaid postcard.

FILING FEES:

FEE CALCULATION				
FEETYPE		FEECODE	CALCULATION	TOTAL
Appeal Brief	41.20(b)(2)	1402 (\$500)		\$500
			TOTAL FEE DUE	\$500.00

Docket No. : AMAZON.18C1C1

Customer No.: 20,995

Application No. : 10/780,486

Filing Date : February 17, 2004

Please charge any additional fees, including any fees for additional extension of time, or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 11-1410.



Ronald J. Schoenbaum
Registration No. 38,297
Attorney of Record
Customer No. 20,995
(949) 760-0404

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